

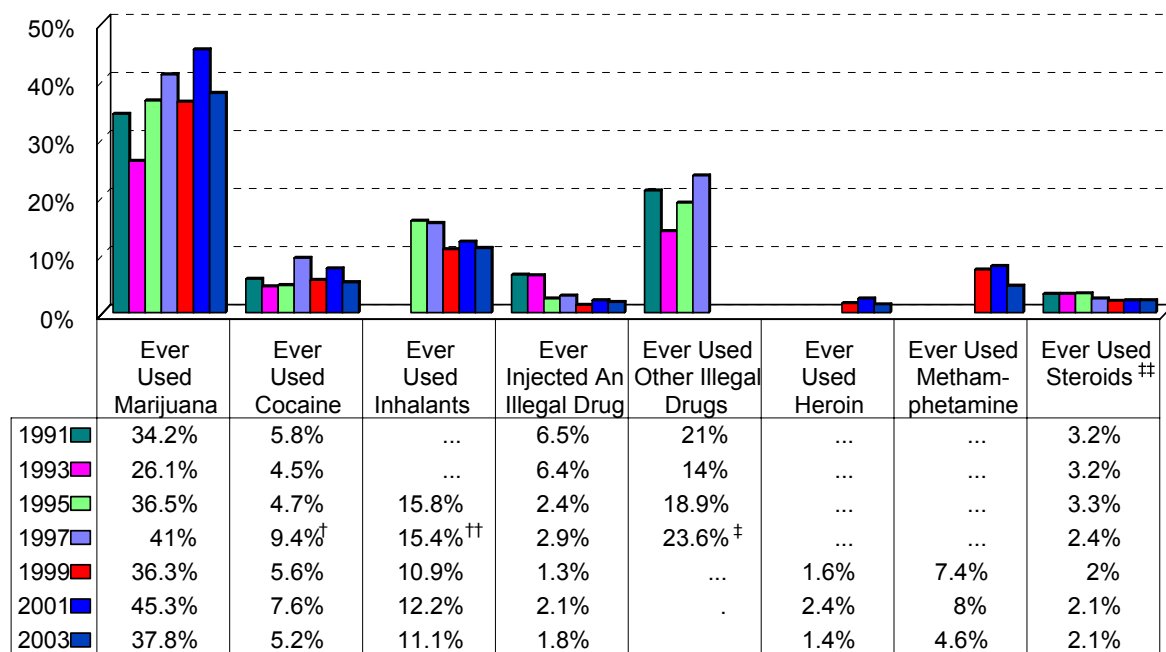
## Illegal Drug Use

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey includes questions on the use of marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, heroin, methamphetamine, steroids, and injected drugs, as well as marijuana use and drug acquisition on school property.

### Highlights

**L** In the last two years there has been a decrease in the use of all types of illegal drugs among Lancaster County teens. The YRBSS data in 2003 indicated that the most common illicit drug ever used by teens remained marijuana (37.8%), followed by inhalants (11.1%), methamphetamine (4.6%) and cocaine (5.2%).

**Figure 1: Lifetime Drug Use<sup>\*</sup>**  
High School Students



<sup>†</sup> "any form of cocaine including powder, crack or freebase"

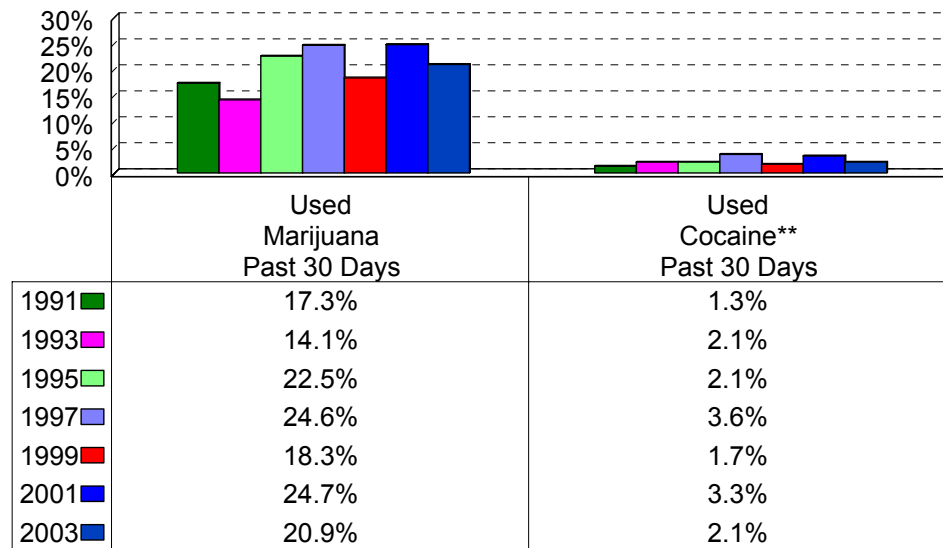
<sup>‡</sup> "LSD, PCP, ecstasy, mushrooms, speed, ice, or heroin"

<sup>††</sup> "sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled paints or sprays"

<sup>‡‡</sup> "steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription"

L Over one-fifth (20.9%) of survey respondents reported that they used marijuana during the past 30 days prior to the survey while only 2.1% reported using cocaine (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Current Drug Use (Past 30 Days)\***  
High School Students



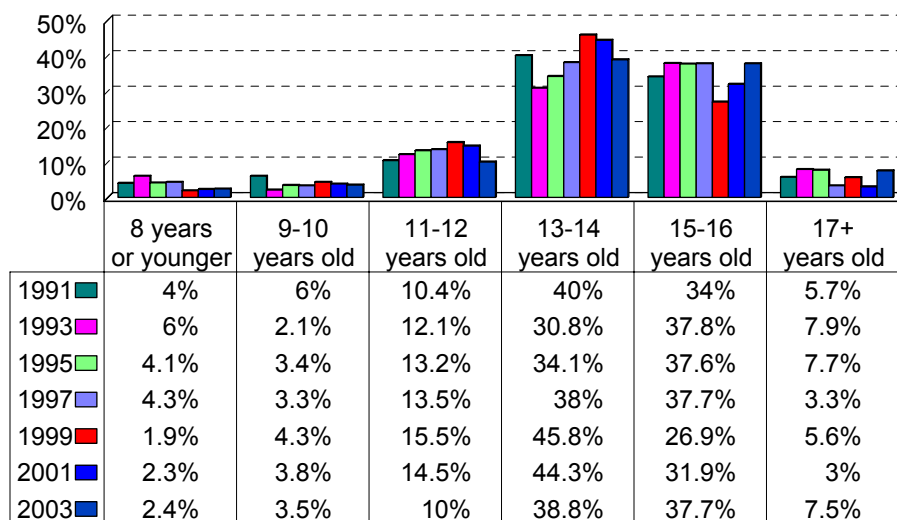
\*\* "Any form of cocaine including powder, crack or freebase"

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\*Grade Adjusted

L In 2003, among those who reported marijuana use, 38.8% reported that they first used it at 13-14 years of age and 37.7% reported using at 15-16 years of age, which indicates that students are beginning to use drugs at a later age than in 2001.

**Figure 3: Marijuana - Age of First Use\***  
High School Students Who Reported Smoking Marijuana During Their Lifetime

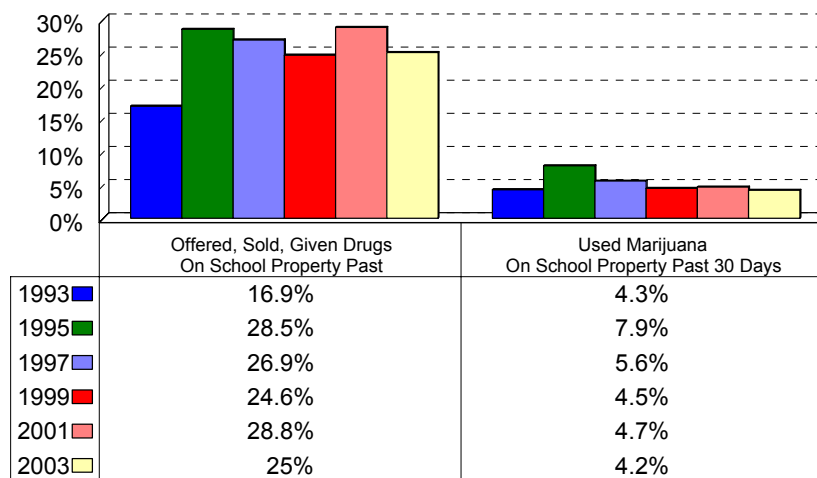


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\*Grade Adjusted

L Drug use on school property appears to be fairly steady since 1995 (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Drug Use On School Property\***  
High School Students

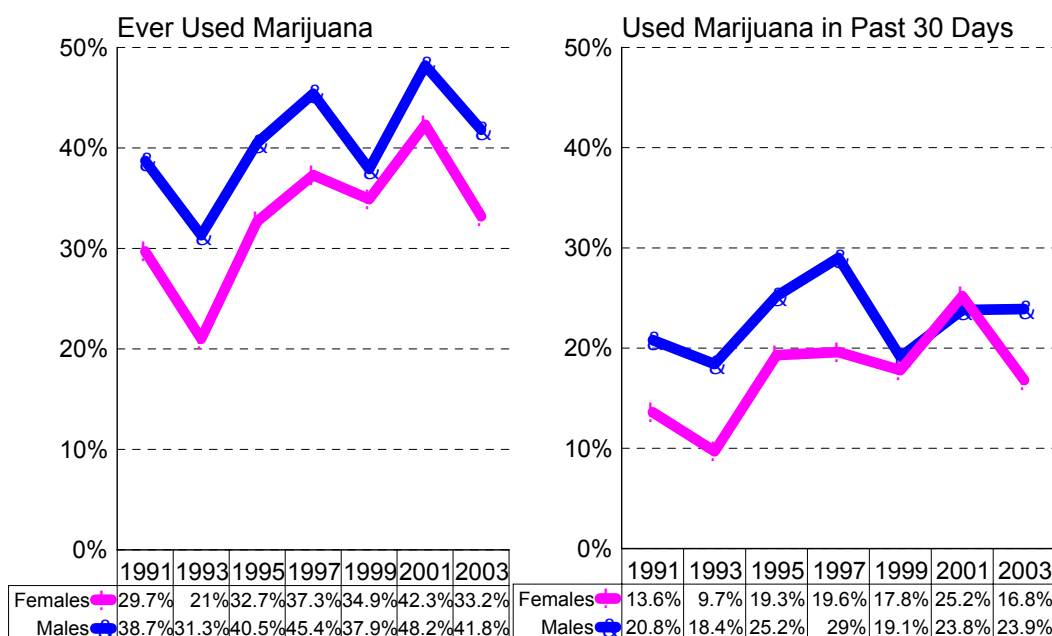


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\*Grade Adjusted

L Figures 5, 6 and 7 show marijuana, cocaine and other drug use by gender.

**Figure 5: Marijuana Use\***  
High School Students

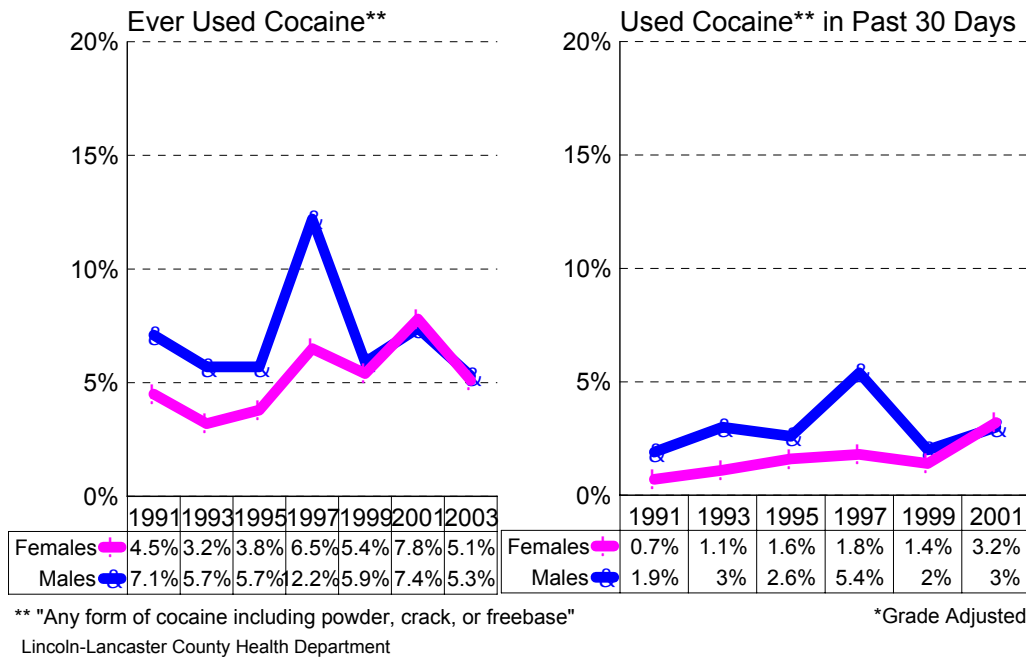


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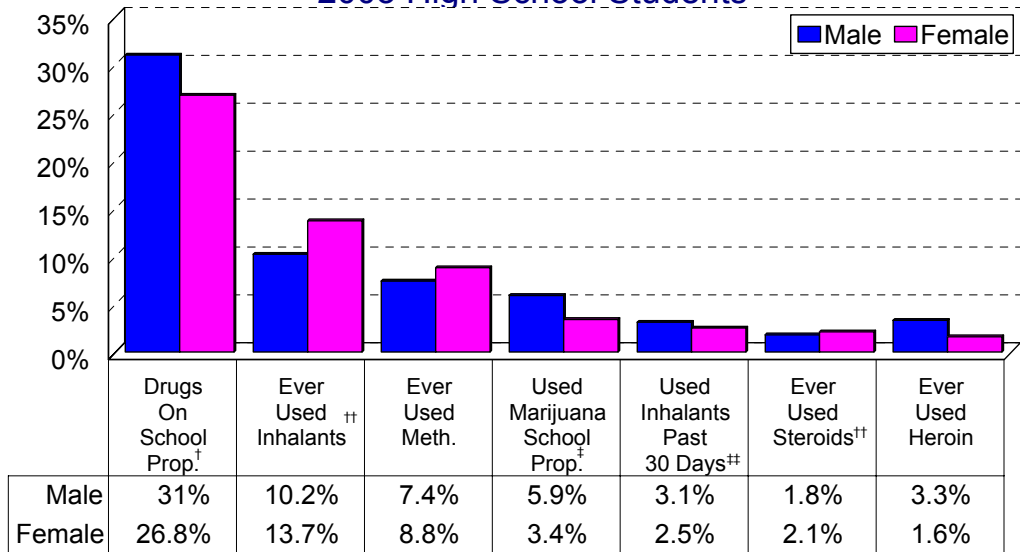
## Figure 6: Cocaine Use\*

### High School Students



## Figure 7: Marijuana and Other Drugs\*

### 2003 High School Students



<sup>†</sup> "offered, sold, or given drugs on school property in past 12 months"

<sup>††</sup> "sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled paints or sprays"

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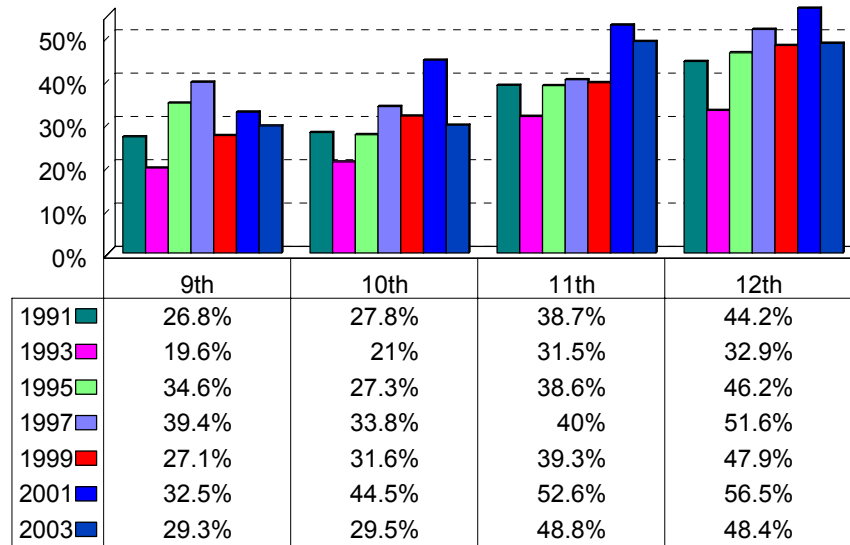
<sup>‡</sup> "used marijuana on school property in the past 30 days"

<sup>‡‡</sup> "steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription"

\*Grade Adjusted

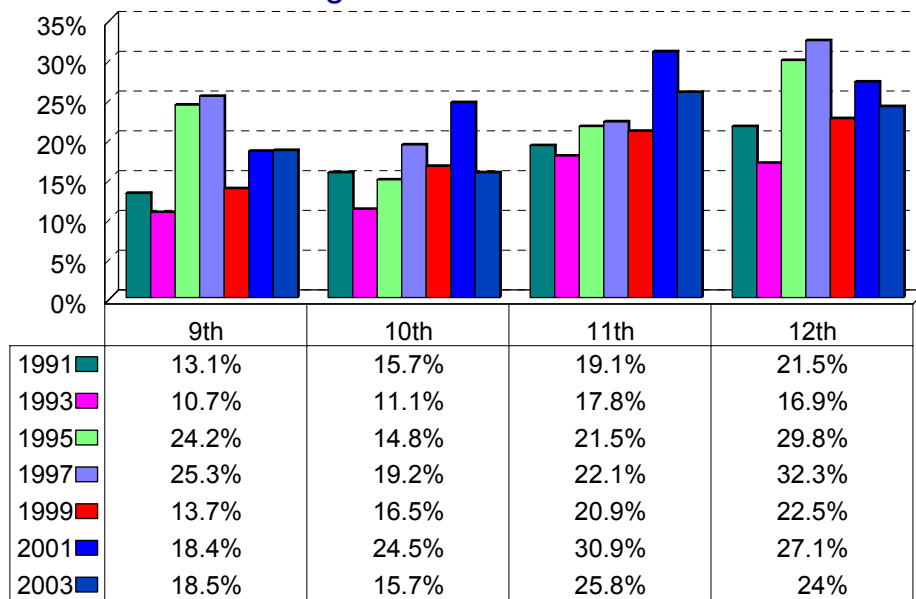
L Except for inhalants (Figure 10) as with many other risk behaviors, teens in older grades have generally been more likely than those in younger grades to report illegal drug use (Figs. 8 - 9). However, the 2003 data appear to show a slight decline in marijuana use in all grades ( except for 9<sup>th</sup> graders marijuana use in the last 30 days

**Figure 8: Ever Used Marijuana by Grade**  
High School Students



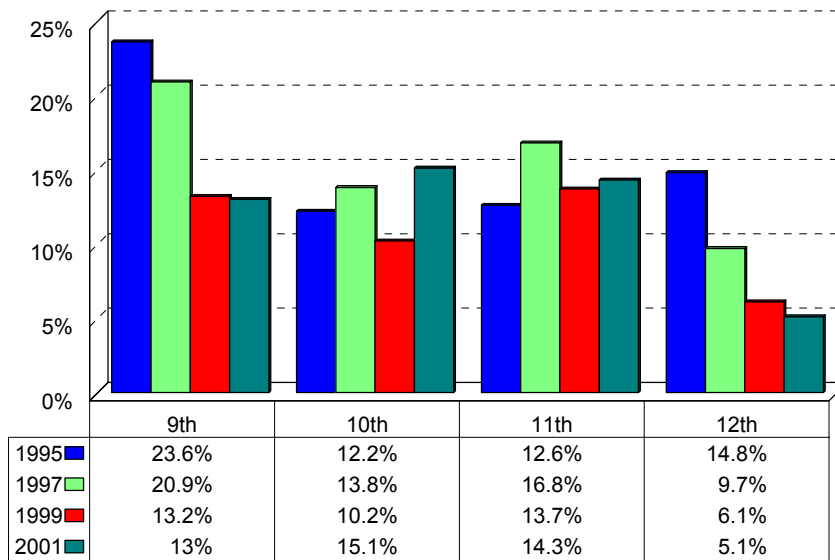
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**Figure 9: Marijuana Use in Past 30 Days by Grade**  
High School Students



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Figure 10: Ever Used Inhalants by Grade  
High School Students



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## **Public Health Comment: Illegal Drugs**

-David Humm

Marijuana continues to be the most used illegal drug in America and this holds true in Lancaster County. In 2003, nearly half (48.4%) of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed reported having used marijuana in their lifetime. In addition, almost a quarter (24%) of these same students reported using marijuana in the previous 30 days. Unfortunately, changes in the perception and knowledge of marijuana as being harmful has decreased over the last five years. This may be due to a increase in pro-drug messages through pop culture and a lack of awareness among parents about a resurgence in drug use.

Research has shown that the key risk periods for drug abuse are during major transitions in childrens' lives. One of the most crucial transitions is when adolescents enter high school where they face more intense social, emotional, and educational challenges. At this same time, they may be exposed to greater availability of drugs, drug abusers, and social activities involving drugs. These challenges can increase the risk that teens will abuse illegal drugs. Prevention programs may vary widely, but generally they are associated with information and referral, education, alternative behaviors, and primary and early intervention activities. These services focus on reducing risk factors and building protective factors.

The Substance Abuse Action Team (SAAT) Prevention Coalition was formed in August 2001 to focus on substance abuse issues in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The coalition's mission is to reduce substance abuse among youth in ages 12 to 17 and to strengthen the coalition into a broad-based, ethnically diverse group of stakeholders dedicated to the principle of making Lincoln and Lancaster County a drug-free community. The coalition is actively recruiting new members, strengthening partnerships with diverse organizations, and planning to provide prevention training for members and the community.